INVESTIGATIONS AT TWO LOCATIONS IN THE ST. JOHN RIVER VALLEY CENTRAL NEW BRUNSWICK: 1982

By: ALBERT FERGUSON

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INTRODUCTION

During the summer months of 1982, two separate portions of the St. John River Valley, in Central New Brunswick were examined. The first section is located in York County, near the City of Fredericton; the second starts in Carleton County and extends into Victoria County. Although the primary objectives proposed for the two projects differed, their overall aim was to complement the ongoing archaeological resources inventory program of the Province.

The surveys were conducted by the Archaeology Branch of the New Brunswick Department of Historical and Cultural Resources under the executive supervision of Dr. C. J. Turnbull; Provincial Archaeologist. Helen Louise Hale, M.A. graduate from the University of Toronto, assisted in the projects. These reconnaissances were mainly oriented towards prehistoric resources inventory. However, historic sites when encountered were also recorded.

THE MOUTH OF KESWICK ISLANDS

THE BACKGROUND

This study area comprise the section of the St. John River which lies between the Mactaquac Power Dam and the mouth of the Keswick River including some of the major islands located at the mouth of Keswick. Over the years numerous artifacts have been collected by amateurs in this area. Such early archaeological activities are reflected in the following accounts: "At the upper end of this island (Savage Island), we obtained a fine plummet, a stone axe, arrow heads, pottery and quantities of chips giving evidence of an Indian encampment having been situated here in former times" (Mckintosh 1911:363).

This collection suggests the possibility that a stratified site might exist on Savage Island, located near the mouth of Keswick River. In 1973, a site (an historic cellar) on the island was excavated by Robert Guthrie, Historical and Cultural Resources Pers. comm. 1982). Information supplied by Mr. Guthrie turned out to be an invaluable aid in locating a prehistoric site on Savage Island. Other locations such as Crocks Point and the flats at the federal fish hatchery, both located on opposite sides of the St. John River, were deemed highly probable site locations.

THE SETTING

The St. John River is the largest river located between the Gulf of Mexico and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. From it's source near the Quebec border in the state of Maine to it's mouth on the Bay of Fundy, the St. John river flows some 720 km and drains an area covering 66,560 sq. km.

Located just west of the city of Fredericton, the 12 km of the St. John River which are the focus of this study, includes small islands just below the head of tide and up-river to the Mactaquac Power Dam (fig. 1). It is a very attractive area with low river terraces and islands which carry a lush and varied vegetation. Many of the islands and terraces are presently used either for agriculture or as pasture for cattle during the summer months.

In historic times ice-jams caused by spring thaw resulted in heavy flooding of the islands and the terraces along major portion of the river (Raymond 1918). In 1969, Mactaquac, the last of three power dams built on the St. John River, was completed. Although these dams almost completely eliminated ice jams on the river, flooding still remains a major problem. This has been in evidence in recent years with a 100 year record high water level occuring in 1973.

Recent archaeological research on two other major rivers in New Brunswick, the Restigouche and the Miramichi, has revealed large sites located at or near the head of tide (Turnbull 1973, Allen 1981). These tend to surpass in size and thickness of cultural deposits, any other sites found elsewhere on these rivers. Also, during the course of this project the survey team observed sports fisherman in great numbers daily invading these waterways to try their skills at catching the ever popular Atlantic Salmon. The team was also aware of the presence of members of nearby Indian reserves camping on Savage Island for the yearly harvest of fiddleheads which abound on the islands. These are but two of the resources seasonally available which would have made this area inviting to prehistoric populations.

METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted during the month of June 1982, by a two person team. A 5 m aluminum boat, powered by a ten horsepower outboard motor, was used to gain access to the islands. The entire circumference of the islands was surveyed on foot. The islands surveyed in this fashion were: Savage, Currie, Parnips and Hartt. A GMC suburban truck was used to visit the major river terraces and Sugar Island which is linked to the north side of the St. John River by a bridge. Sites found were recorded using newly revised MARI forms (Davis & Christianson 1981:75). Colour slides and snap shots were taken with a 35 mm and polaroid cameras. Subsurface testing at the prehistoric locations was conducted once permission had been obtained from the owner(s).

SITES DESCRIPTIONS

BlDql

The site is located at the southwest extremity of Savage Island just northeast from an extensive gravel spit. It consists of cultural material surface collected off an old erosional bank just above a relatively recent sandy terrace, approximately 15 m in from present day shore. It appears to have been "washed" down to that position. The collection consists of pseudo-scollop and dentate pottery fragments, three flakes, a crude water-worn axe, a chopper and a hammerstone. A long bone and some historical material were also found. All material came from a 2 sq. m area, except for the axe which was found on the gravel beach in front of the side. Extenstive survey along the entire bank failed to reveal other concentrations of materials. Although erosion has evidently caused a great amount of damage to this site it does not appear to be a threat at the present as a band of silt seems to have been deposited in front of it. However this situation could be subject to rapid change if a shift in the sediment deposition pattern, due to a major spring flood, was to occur. The present damage to the site is caused by cattle.

Permission to test the site was graciously granted by Mr. David Duplessis of Mouth of Keswick, present owner of that portion of Savage Island on which BlDql is located. Two conditions were set by Mr. Duplesis. First that all excavations be dug and refilled on the same day to avoid injury to cattle, and second,that the site be revisted by staff of Historical and Cultural Resources in the fall to ensure that soil stability has not been affected by our activities.

Four 1 m square test units were excavated by the survey team. Test pit No. 1 was put in exactly on top of where the material was collected in the old erosional face approximately 2 m below the upper leveled area and 1 m above the sandy, probably not-so ancient, lower terrace. A scraper made of red material and a few fire cracked rocks were found. Test pit No. 1 was taken down to 1 m in depth but no cultural horizon could be defined in the erosional bank.

Test pits No. 2, 3 and 4 were layed out on the upper terrace above test pit No. 1 location. All were taken down to well below 1 m in depth. Except for the odd fire cracked rock and one historic artifact, these three test-pits failed to uncover a cultural living floor.

B1Dq2

An historic location on Sugar Island is represented by a large dark strain in a cultivated field. A small number of ceramic sherds, as well as pipe stem fragments were collected. The site is not threatened by erosion, but is being disturbed by agricultural activities.

SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY

Sites with information recorded are summarized on Table #1. Only two sites were discovered in the course of this survey. One of these is prehistoric in nature; the other is historic. Both are located on two different islands at the mouth of the Keswick River, a tributary to the St. John River. Four test units were sunk at the prehistoric locations, but all of them failed to reveal any definite subsurface cultural horizon.

CONCLUSION

The objective set out at the beginning of this project has been partially achieved. A site on Savage Island was located and it's location does correspond to that described in the Natural History Society publication. However, the team was unable to ascertain the presence of any subsurface cultural remains. This points to two possibilities: either the site is buried below the level reached in the test units, or it has been completely washed away by erosion. To verify these, more testing would have to be performed at BlDql. Test units proposed here are 1.5 m sq. in. size as these would be less restrictive at depth below one metre. In order to conform to the owner's first proviso, while testing, special measures would have to be taken to keep cattle off the research area. This could either be done by putting up a fence around the area, or using solid cover to cap proposed test units overnight. A different approach would be to grid the area and do systematic subsurface probing using a mechanized device which would make small diametre bore holes down 2 or 3 m in depth. These could be easily refilled on the same day. A two person team could easily carry out either proposals over a period of two weeks.

The 1982 project is by no means reflective of the potential inventory of archaeological resources in the area. Time spent testing BlDql coupled with a number of days of bad weather resulted in that only a handfull of small islands, at the mouth of the Keswick River, had close examination. Sugar Island and the two major terraces mentioned at the beginning of this report were only summarily looked at. Due to the alluvial deposition pattern, some of the terraces seem to be building out and therefore not exhibiting traces of prehistoric cultural activities in their banks.

Similarly, the various channels dividing the Island are subject to shifts or being completely filled-in during major floods, resulting in sites that were originally located on the shore of an Island or a terrace now buried inland. These could only be located by subsurface probing. Therefore, any future site locating project in this area would have to take these fluvial processes into account. The use of aerial photography to trace old river channels should be a must. Also a coring device, such as the one described above, could be used to test promising locations. One last recommendation is that the resource inventory of historic sites, in the area, should be more effectively incorporated in the survey project.

THE ST. JOHN RIVER VALLEY IN CARELTON-VICTORIA COUNTIES

THE BACKGROUND

This study area involves a stretch of the St. John River, approximately 125 km long, in Central New Brunswick. It starts at the mouth of Bulls Creek, south of the Town of Woodstock and ends at the mouth of the Aroostook River.

Archaeologically speaking, it is known to be an area rich in resources. For decades private collectors and amateur archaeologists have explored its river banks. This is reflected in a publication on the archaeological investigations undertaken by one of the Maritimes most renowned amateur archaeologist (Clarke 1968). Professional work in the area, on the other hand, has been most sporadic and summary. In 1914, Dr. W. K. Morehead of the Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts, led an expedition of eleven archaeology students down the St. John River in canoes. In 1933, Dr. W. Wintemberg of the National Museum made a short visit to the area while conducting an excavation at St. Anne's Pt. in Fredericton, N. B. (Clarke 1968). More recently, in 1960-64, a two man team from the National Museum, under the direction of Mr. D. Kettel, conducted a survey of the area now submerged by the Mactaquac Dam Headpond (Turnbull, pers. comm. 1983). A little distance from the study area is the Deadman's Pool site. This site is located near the Tobique River, a tributary of the St. John River. It was excavated in 1968 by Dr. D. Sanger, then of the National Museum of Man. The Tobique Complex which was discovered there is closely related to the Sheild Archaic Tradition (Sanger 1971). The Whitemarsh Creek site located on a river terrace in Florenceville was excavated in 1974 under Dr. C. J. Turnbull of N. B. Historical and Cultural Resources (Allen 1975).

At present, the Mactaquac Headpond ends 3-4 km above Woodstock, New Brunswick, but a 1 m elevation in water level is now proposed by the New Brunswick Electric Power Commission. This would affect the St. John River at least as far as Hartland, N. B. and possibly beyond. This village is located some 15 km north of Woodstock. The primary objectives of this project were to survey the area that would be affected by the proposed rise of water level, to record any archaeological resources present, to assess their present state (i.e. threat by erosion or by man), and to evaluate the possible impact the changing water levels would have. This pertained to the Meduxnekeag River from its mouth to the TransCanada highway bridge and the St. John River from Bulls Creek south of Woodstock to Hartland. Secondly, if time permitted, the team was to travel north beyond this primary survey area, record the known sites and reconnoiter the area for future survey projects.

THE SETTING

The study area lies in one of the province's most fertile regions (fig. 1). In fact most of the land has been cleared for agriculture. Thus the Acadian mixed forest, predominantly hardwood in character which occupied this region in historic times is not readily apparent (Rowe 1972). The presence of some relatively uncommon species of hardwood, such as the butternut, found more commonly to the south, has resulted in the name "Butternut County" being adopted as the local name. The St. John River flows in a broad valley amid an undulating topography of uneven uplands separated by rolling low lands (Rowe 1972). The St. John and its tributaries were renowed in historic times for the fine trout and salmon fishing they offered (Raymond 1910:7-17). At a relatively short distance from the river are the habitats of large game such as deer, moose and, in former times, caribou. The lower flats along the river are now being used for agriculture or pasture. Railroad trackage has been built along the eastern shore severely disturbing much of the river bank studied.

METHODOLOGY

A team, consisting of two individuals, carried out the survey during the month of July 1982. The team first drove, using a G.M.C. suburban truck, the full length of the study area, on both sides of the valley, to familiarize themselves with it's topography, and find side access roads to the river. A known local collector was contacted, and he generously assisted by pointing out locations of known resources and those believed to be promising. The length of the Meduxnekeag River from it's mouth to the TransCanada highway bridge was surveyed on foot. The same was done to the area near its mouth in the town of Woodstock and aross the St. John River from Grafton point to Newburg Junction at Pine Island. A 5 m aluminum boat, powered by a ten horsepower outboard motor, was used to gain access to the islands, flats and other exposed beaches for the remainder of the primary study area. For the second part of this project, the team used only the truck and was accompanied by Mr. Frederick Burnett from Hartland, N. B. Mr. Burnett is a private collector who generously volunteered his time to assist us in locating a number of very interesting sites.

SITE DESCRIPTIONS

CaDv4 (Bull Creek Site)

This site was located on the north-northeast end of the now flooded, Bull Creek flats. The flat now forms a chain of small islands along the St. John River's west bank. The site is approximately 4 km south of Woodstock Town limits.

Its location has been known to local collectors for some time, as we were told by Mr. Burnett. It also had been recorded by Kettel during his 1964 survey prior to the Mactaquac dam construction (Archaeology Branch site file). It was visited by the survey team in order to

assess its present state and evaluate its future destruction rate in terms of the proposed elevation of water level in the Mactaquac Headpond. The team also hoped to "surface collect" some culturally representative material. Unfortunately, when the team arrived by boat, the usually exposed sandy beach and banks were submerged by an unusually high water level. The submergence of this group of small islands along with the rapid destruction of what might remain of this site would be inevitable if water level is to be raised. A concentration of lithic debitage was found by Daniel Myles on the beach at this site later in the fall when water level had dropped (D. Myles, Historical and Cultural Resources staff, pers. comm. 1982).

CbDv3 (Burnett Site)

This site was recently recorded by staff of the Archaeology Branch when first reported by its owner, Mr. Frederick Burnett of Upper Brighton. It was re-examined during a visit at the Burnett's homestead. It is located in the cultivated garden just south of Mr. Burnett's home, on an elevated terrace overlooking the St. John River which lies to the west. Originally one ground stone fragment and a core had been found. The survey team failed to find anything more on this occasion.

CbDv4 (Sharps Island Site)

The site is centrally located on the eastern shore of Sharps Island. Two possible quartz cores were found on the beach. The site is considered as an "isolated find site" as no cultural deposits were found in the erosional bank.

CbDv5 (Butternut Site)

This site is located on the west shore of the St. John River approximately 6.5 km south of the Hartland covered bridge. A small meadow with tall butternut trees, presently used as a pasture, marked its location. Lithic artifacts and debitage were found scattered abundantly for 50 m along the sandy water edge and eroding out of the steep river bank. No material could be found eroding-out higher than one metre above present water level in the 3 m high bank. This site is being damaged by river erosion and animal husbandry, a condition accelerated by fluctuations in water levels.

CbDv6 (Moose Track Site)

Located on the west shore of the St. John River, approximately 7.5 km south of the Hartland Covered Bridge. Lithic material was found on the sandy beach at the mouth of a fresh water stream. Pottery fragments were found underneath an uprooted tree almost 2 m above present water level.

The location of the "Saunders" site as described in an earlier publication, roughly matches that of the presently located spot. (Clarke 1868:206); they may be one and the same. If this is the case, erosion has taken a large portion off the front of this site since it was last investigated. Erosion appears to be the sole destructive agent.

CbDv7 (Chickadee Site)

This site is located on the west side of the St. John River just north of Pine Island, across from Newburg Junction. Litic material was found for approximately 30 m along a steep silt bank just south of the mouth of a

small stream. Above lay a large cultivated terrace. The team did not find anything at the edge of this field. Maturing oats prevented a closer examination of the ploughed area.

Here again, there is a close resemblance between this site and one described by Clarke. The "Campsite on Bert Shaw's Flat" (1968:204) and CbDv7 are probably the same. Clark also gives a description of the collection that the owner had made on this site. It includes incised bone fragments depicting "a series of conical wigwams" and a "tanged spear for taking fish". Erosion and agricultural activities are the two main disturbing agents at this site.

CcDv3 (The Bristol Site)

The site is located in a field now cultivated for potatoes in Bristol, N. B. It is on the upper terrace of two terraces overlooking the St. John River, between the Little Shikatehawk Stream and the Shikatehawk Stream. The site is separated from Highway #105 by C.P.R. railway tracks and old potato shipping warehouses. This site is also known as the "Shik-Ta-Hawk" site and has been the focus of attention by amateurs and professionals alike (Clarke 1968:112-126).

The team examined the area by walking between the cultivated rows and collected a number of flakes made of various material as well as three artifacts. Most of the material was collected along the western edge of the potato field. This is the largest site recorded in this survey. It is estimated to cover over 15 hectars. At the present, damage to the site is caused by agriculture and recent buildings on the southern portion.

CeDw1 (Lower Perth Site)

The site is located on the east side of St. John River between Perth-Andover and the community of Coronation, just off route #105. On a sandy beach, which is usually under water from the Beechwood Dam Reservoir, three flakes were surface collected and a number of fire-cracked rocks were noticed. A large chunk of lithic raw material had also been collected here during the previous month by Chris Turnbull (pers. comm. 1982). This site appears to have been completely destroyed by erosion and submergence.

CeDw2 (Bishop Settlement Site)

This site is located on the east shore of the St. John River, on a sandy beach just below Coronation, N. B. Artifacts and flakes were concentrated mostly on a 30 m stretch of beach; with the occasional flake found for 250 m along the water edge.

There is also an historic component at this site. A sill foundation was found right in the beach sand near the present erosional bank. An 1811 coin was discovered near the foundation and is presently in Mr. Burnett's private collection.

It was impossible to estimate how much of the prehistoric site still remained. No cultural horizon could be defined in the low eroded bank and the thick undergrowth inland prevented surface collecting.

CeDw3 (Tobique's Mouth Site)

This site is located on the east shore of the St. John River immediately south of the mouth of the Tobique River. Heavy concentration of lithic material and pottery sherds were found on a 150 m stretch of beach and in the adjacent bank. Mr. Burnett told us that this beach was seldom exposed and, although he always suspected this leveled terrace to contain a site, this was the first time he had the opportunity to verify it. No mention of this site is found in earlier literature.

This site was estimated to cover at least one hectar. Erosion of the site is extensive and it's rate is believed to be great due to the nature of the terrace deposits. These consists of fine sand and silt and are washed away in large chunks from the steep river bank. Other disturbance to the site is the C. P. R. Railway tracks which dissects a portion of it.

CeDw4 (Tobique Narrows Site)

It is located on the south side of the Tobique River approximately 300 m from its mouth. Here again the uncommonly low water level of the Beechwood Headpond provided the survey team with the opportunity to record a prehistoric location which is normally submerged. On a 70 m long by 10 m wide sand exposure, flakes, artifacts and firecracked rocks littered the surface. This low gradient shore had only a gently low bank. The thick vegetation above this expanse prohibited the team from carrying out an investigation inland. It is, therefore, unknown if any of the site remains unsubmerged at normal water level.

CeDw5 (The Seaplane Site)

This site is located on the south side of the Aroostook River where it joins the St. John. It is approximatey 100 m to the southeast of the C.P.R. railway bridge which spans the Aroostook River near its mouth.

Flakes, historic ceramic fragments, and metal fragments were found scattered over a 20 m long stretch of beach and in the adjacent bank. This site does not appear to exhibit evidence of an extensive occupation. A seaplane hangar is now located above the site.

CeDw6 (Aroostook Flat Site)

This site is located along the river edge of a very large level terrace on the west side of the St. John River; the terrace is now being cultivated for potatoes. The site consists of two small lithic concentrations located approximately 100 m apart in the dirt tracks between the cultivated field and the bank edge. The river bank is very steep and approximately 8 m high. This site probably represents two separate short occupations. Agriculture appears to be the chief source of disturbance. River erosion does not appear to be an immediate threat.

CeDw7 (Lower Aroostook Flat Site)

Located along the western shore of the St. John River, close to C.P.R. railway tracks and highway #105. CeDw6 is approximately 800 m to the north. A small number of flakes were found on a medium grade, fine sandy beach for about 15 m. Here again, extensive occupation is not in evidence. The possibility that the entire site has been destroyed by the combination of erosion, road and railway construction is strongly suspected.

SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY

Table #1 summarize the sites with information recorded. A total of fourteen prehistoric sites were visited during this two part survey. Five are located within the area to be affected by the proposed elevation of the Mactaquac Headpond level. The rest are north of this area, between Hartland and the mouth of the Aroostook River. All are prehistoric locations with two, CeDw2 and CeDw5, having historic components. No sites were recorded in the "drowned" section of the Meduxnekeag River surveyed.

CONCLUSIONS

It is apparent that the five sites located in the Mactaquac pond proposed expansion zone, are in danger of being destroyed rapidly, once this proposal becomes reality. All, in their present state, exhibit extensive lost by attrition. Of these five sites, two were estimated by the team to be damaged beyond usefullness as a resource; they are CaDv4 and CbDv4. CbDv5, 6 and 7 are located near what was observed to be the head of the Mactaquac reservoir - a transitional area between river and lake. Damage to these three sites appeared to be severe but, for them, only further investigation, such as test excavations, would reveal their full value as a resource. The head of the Mactaquac reservoir would shift up river with the proposed 1 m elevation of the water level and these resources would be drowned and rapidly anihilated.

A site testing program is recommended for CbDv5, 6 and 7. This would have to be initiated soon, certainly well before the Mactaquac pond is expanded. A two person team could carry-out the work in a two week period. A small boat would be needed for fast and easy access to the three sites.

The results of the preliminary reconnaissance performed up-river from Hartland, N. B. is, at least, encouraging. The construction of highways and railways for major lengths on both sides of the Saint John River, and the drowning of the valley above the Beechwood Power Dam has undoubtedly resulted in heavy losses to our archaeological resources. However, this past summer's work has proven that much remains. The relatively less disturbed section between Hartland and Beechwood, which was not examined during the course of this project due to low water level and absence of river front access roads, seems to be very promising. And, the major finds at the upper end of Beechwood reservoir are no less encouraging. However this may be restricted to the upper end of this man-made reservoir. The area should be thoroughly surveyed soon. A canoe, in addition to a motorized watercraft, is highly recommended.

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Table I Summary of Archaeological Sites, St. John River; York, Carleton, Victoria Counties, New Brunswick - 1982

Site No.	Kind	Primary(P) or Artifact(AL) Location	Observed Dimensions L (m)	W (m)	A (sq.m)	Eroding	Modern Disturbance	Age	Remarks
BlDq1	Domestic	P	2	1	2	x	x	Prehistoric	
BlDq2	Domestic	P	40	40	1600	-	x	Historic	Dark stain in potato field
CaDv4	Domestic	AL	?	?	?	x	-	Prehistoric	
CbDv3	-	-	?	?	?	-	x	Prehistoric	
CbDv4	-	AL	?	?	?	x	-	Prehistoric	Isolcated find
CbDv5	Domestic	P	50	2	100	x	x	Prehistoric	
CbDv6	Domestic	P	35	3	105	x	-	Prehistoric	
CbDv7	Domestic	P	30	5	150	x	x	Prehistoric	
CcDv3	Domestic	P	600	100	60,000	-	x	Prehistoric	
CeDw1	Domestic	AL	?	?	?	x	-	Prehistoric	
CeDw2	Domestic	P	250	15	3,750	x	-	Prehistoric & Historic	
CeDw3	Domestic	P	150	10	1,500	x	x	Prehistoric	
CeDw4	Domestic	P	70	10	700	x	-	Prehistoric	
CeDw5	Domestic	P	20	10	200	x	-	Prehistoric	
CeDw6	Domestic	P	100	5	500	-	x	Prehistoric	two small lithic concentration
CeDw7	Domestic	P	15	5	75	x	x	Prehistoric	probably all gone

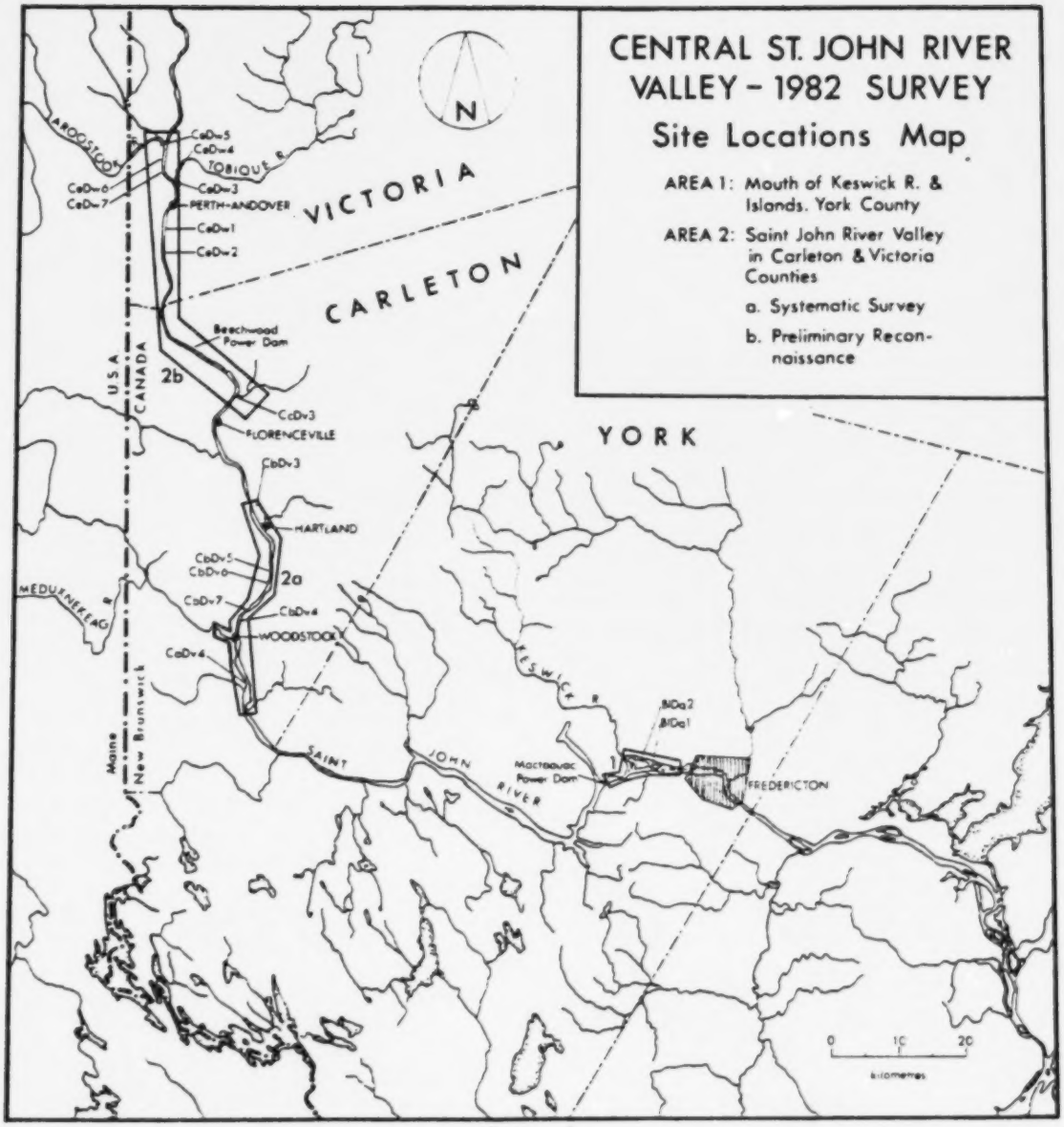
CENTRAL ST. JOHN RIVER VALLEY - 1982 SURVEY
Site Locations Map
AREA 1: Mouth of Keswick R. & Islands. York County
AREA 2: Saint John River Valley in Carleton & Victoria Counties
a. Systematic Survey
b. Preliminary Reconnaissance
N
VICTORIA
CARLETON
YORK
AROOSTOOK
TOBIQUE R.
CeDv5
CeDv4
CeDv6
CeDv7
CeDv3
PERTH-ANDOVER
CeDv1
CeDv2
Beechwood Power Dam
2b
USA
CANADA
CcDv3
FLORENCEVILLE
CbDv3
HARTLAND
CbDv5
CbDv6
2a
CbDv7
CbDv4
WOODSTOCK
MEDUNEREAG R.
CaDv4
Maine
New Brunswick
KESWICK R.
BDa2
BDa1
SAINT JOHN RIVER
Mactaquac Power Dam
FREDERICTON
0
10
20
kilometres

Figure 1